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Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 95: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (continued) (A/49/24 and Add.1, A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/213, A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/294, A/49/307-S/1994/958, A/49/381, A/49/422-S/1994/1086, A/49/434, 435, 462 and Corr.1 and 506; A/C.3/49/4/Rev.1)

1. Mr. LINDQVIST (Special Rapporteur for the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities) said that the Standard Rules annexed to General Assembly resolution 48/96 had been drawn up in response to a request from the international community of disabled persons for stronger leadership on disability issues from the United Nations. The Rules were essentially a matter of human rights. In every country there were still obstacles preventing persons with disabilities from exercising their rights and freedoms and making it difficult for them to participate fully in the activities of their societies. The Rules, he stressed, gave Member States the responsibility for taking appropriate action to remove such obstacles. Member States were now strongly committed, both politically and morally, to produce concrete, sustainable results.

2. His monitoring activities would be directed, he emphasized, towards support, advice and assistance, not criticism and control. A panel of experts made up of highly qualified persons from all parts of the world had been established to assist him. The Rules had already been translated into all United Nations languages and distributed to the Member States. The next step would be to direct a first letter to Governments asking them what they had done and were planning to do to implement the Rules. As soon as possible, he would also initiate a dialogue with the United Nations regional commissions in order to ascertain their contribution to the effort. The monitoring mechanism would be funded mainly by extrabudgetary resources, and he and the Secretariat would soon be approaching Governments in order to attempt to negotiate decent conditions for the monitoring activities. The Standard Rules set a three-year period for the monitoring exercise. Thus the international community had three years to prove its intention to recognize and enforce the human rights of its disabled citizens. That was a noble goal, and he looked forward to the cooperation of the Member States in achieving it.

3. Ms. ZACHARIAH (Malaysia) said that much remained to be done at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development in order to justify the presence of heads of State and Government at the World Summit. The Summit should give rise to an international social compact encompassing all the core issues and supported by the necessary resources.

4. She thanked the Secretary-General for his report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/49/434). Her Government coordinated and supported youth activities through several ministries and had allocated funds for youth training programmes in various labour-intensive sectors as well as for youth-centred

programmes involving sports and club activities. In most developing countries, young people formed the backbone of society, and optimizing their potential was essential for national development. National experiences with youth-related programmes represented an important source of information for the drafting of the world programme of action for youth towards the year 2000. The Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development should take the leading role in organizing United Nations activities in that respect, and the Commission for Social Development, in preparing the final draft, should clearly define the role of the Secretariat.

5. Her delegation welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur for the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It was concerned at the possibility that he might not receive adequate funding and it would bring the matter up with its Government. She urged other delegations, especially those whose countries were at the forefront of the disability issue, to do the same. Her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/49/435). Her country was anxious to improve the integration of disabled persons and believed that the Standard Rules and the World Programme of Action would be of assistance in that regard.

6. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the status and role of cooperatives (A/49/213), she said that her Government supported his recommendations concerning cooperatives, which played an important role in her country in mobilizing capital, generating employment and increasing productivity. Cooperative movements had minimized, if not eliminated, the role of middlemen in many transactions. Cooperatives were encouraged in the agricultural, manufacturing, transport, housing, banking and credit sectors. Schools had established library, canteen and bookshop cooperatives, and some cooperatives provided scholarships or had banded together to form training institutions and colleges.

7. Mr. OULD ELY (Mauritania) said that, paradoxically, the end of the cold war had brought armed conflict, associated with the re-emergence of racial and religious intolerance, and a deterioration in the living standards of most of the world's population. The principles of reaffirmation of the dignity of the human person and promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, set forth in the Charter, had never been in greater jeopardy. The situation was worst in the developing countries, especially in Africa and among the most vulnerable groups. As heads of households, refugees or migrants, more and more women were living in poverty. Young people, society's hope for the future, faced overwhelming economic and social difficulties, and his country hoped that the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, to be marked in 1995, would be preceded by the adoption of an effective programme of action for youth. It supported the suggestion made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/49/434) with respect to the number of plenary meetings to be devoted to commemorations of the Year and adoption of the world programme of action, as well as his suggestion that an international youth day should be declared in 1995.

8. It was inconceivable for small islands of wealth to continue to exist amidst a sea of poverty. Of course, primary responsibility for a country's development lay with its Government. However, in an interdependent world operating under an economic system that penalized developing countries, the outcome of any national development effort was uncertain. Despite often painful economic reforms, the gap between the rich and the poor countries had widened terribly during the past 30 years. It was necessary for the international community to launch a new partnership between North and South with a view to lightening the debt burden, abolishing arbitrary trade practices and increasing donor countries' official development assistance in conformity with the goal of 0.7 per cent of gross national product set by the United Nations. The World Summit for Social Development constituted a unique opportunity to determine the obstacles to development and to formulate an effective new strategy for attacking the root causes of poverty. What was needed was a veritable social contract among all the countries of the globe.

9. Miss GHIRGAB (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the flagrant discrepancy between standards of living in and between countries over the past 50 years was a challenge for humanity as a whole to establish the new international economic order based on equity and the redistribution of income and wealth. The starting-point for tackling social problems and achieving social integration and harmony was the basic unit of society, the family.

10. Such vulnerable social groups as the disabled should remain an international priority. She therefore welcomed the adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. She also welcomed the Secretary-General's report (A/49/435), and hoped that the annexed draft plan of action to implement the Long-term Strategy to Further Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons would be supported by the entire international community.

11. The integration of disabled persons into society was a priority of social development policies in her own country. Legislation adopted in the 1980s provided a number of benefits for the disabled. Her country called for higher priority to be given to the disabled by the international community and in particular for more resources to be made available to the Disabled Persons Unit of the United Nations Secretariat.

12. Libyan legislation aimed at the all-round development of society rather than favouring one group above another. On that basis, education had been proclaimed as a human right, elementary education had been made compulsory and emphasis was placed not merely on quantitative development in terms of the number of students, teachers and schools but on improving the quality of education, particularly technical education.

13. Development plans in her country concentrated on the provision of basic services such as housing, health and clean drinking water. Health care was available without charge to all Libyan citizens.

14. The first phase of the project for the creation of the great man-made river had been completed and was aimed at curbing migration to towns, establishing residential areas, reclaiming new lands and drawing water for agriculture and drinking purposes from beneath the desert.

15. Those achievements over the past two decades in the field of social development were now threatened by the unjust sanctions imposed by the United States of America since the 1980s and by the Security Council since 1992, at the instigation of the United States. The sanctions had been gravely detrimental to all sectors of society and to social and economic life. Thus, an entire people had been deprived of the right to development, a right that was protected by many international instruments, such as the Declaration on the Right to Development adopted by the General Assembly in 1986. It was illogical that such sanctions should be imposed by an organ of the United Nations whose Charter was based on respect for human rights.

16. The detrimental effect of the sanctions had been extensively described in United Nations documents. For example, the air blockade had prevented the medical evacuation of about 9,000 patients suffering from medical conditions which could not be treated locally. An attempt to use overland means of transport had resulted in the death of some 350 patients. Consignments of medical supplies, particularly serums and vaccines, had been delayed, resulting in the death of some 350 infants and 150 women solely because of the shortage of drugs. The issuance of approvals by the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 748 (1992) concerning Libya for the medical evacuation of emergency cases by air had been delayed or unjustifiably prevented by the intransigence of certain States.

17. Mr. CHUA (Singapore) said that his country attached great importance to the family, which was the very foundation of Singapore's success. The state of the family determined both the moral tone of society and its economic health. Societies in economic decline were plagued by a breakdown of the family, which eroded the work ethic and led to vandalism, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse. Economically vibrant societies had strong family units, where individuals pursued happiness without disregard for the interests of their family or society as a whole.

18. His country was convinced that its continued success depended on preserving the family unit. Accordingly, his Government had designed policies to pursue that objective, providing low-cost public housing and financial assistance to newly married couples and tax rebates to children who supported their parents. Singapore's low divorce and juvenile-delinquency rates showed that those policies were working.

19. In accordance with its policy of helping families help themselves, his Government had enacted legislation under which children were responsible for looking after elderly parents. By making families more self-sufficient, the State could be freed for other tasks which are more urgent and which it was better equipped to handle. In pursuing pro-family policies, Singapore had been careful not to infringe on the rights of individuals. Strong and supportive

family units not only stabilized and strengthened society, but also promoted the rights of the individual more effectively than courts or human rights conventions.

20. Ms. MATENGU (Namibia) said that the United Nations should convene a special plenary meeting, with participation at the highest political level, devoted to questions relating to youth and coinciding as closely as possible with the fiftieth anniversary of the Organization. The draft world programme of action for youth and the youth statement of intent should be adopted at that meeting. Namibia also supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that the United Nations should designate an international youth day in 1995, and encouraged Governments to include young people among their representatives to mark the fiftieth anniversary. The upcoming World Summit for Social Development should define concrete measures to deal with questions relating to youth in particular.

21. In Namibia, young people constituted nearly three quarters of the population. The legacy of apartheid had an impact on youth in all sectors. The advent of independence and the subsequent demobilization of the armed forces had left many young people with no skills or formal education to help their integration into society. Low levels of literacy and education had aggravated unemployment, estimated at 30 per cent. In order to address the problems of young people, her Government had established the Ministry of Youth and Sports and identified priority areas for activities: employment, skills training, health and the environment. Youth skills-training centres had been established for school drop-outs. A national youth enterprise fund had been set up to promote self-employment by giving young people access to credit. The National Youth Council, with which all Namibian youth organizations were affiliated, acted as an advisory body to the Government.

22. The widespread illiteracy, particularly among women, was a serious impediment to development. The Fourth World Conference on Women should address the special needs of girls. The programme of action to be adopted at that Conference should include provisions concerning scholarships for girls, particularly in technical and vocational subjects; the reintegration of girls into schools when their education had been interrupted by pregnancy or other factors; and facilities that were accessible for girls and young women.

23. Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the World Summit for Social Development should provide an opportunity for considering the structural causes of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration in order to bring about a system of collective security in the social field, creating a favourable economic and social environment. The World Summit must resolutely address the economic challenges facing developing countries, particularly external debt, structural adjustment programmes, fluctuating commodity prices and declining financial flows towards the poorest countries. Specific commitments on the part of bilateral donors, financial institutions, development agencies, Governments and societies as a whole were necessary to ensure the Summit's success.

24. Africa should be given special consideration, in both the draft declaration and the draft programme of action to be adopted at the World Summit. Many

countries, including his own, had inadequate resources to implement social development strategies. The critical economic situation in Africa should be taken into account as one of the foremost concerns of the Organization. African countries required support for their efforts to help themselves become part of the world economy. The next session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit should adopt specific provisions concerning Africa with a view to mobilizing resources. The commitment of African countries to strengthen their national capacities through active participation by beneficiaries was real. That effort, however, must take place within the framework of dynamic international cooperation. Measures involving debt remission for social development and the allocation of 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance should be adopted at the World Summit. The "20/20" concept described in the draft programme of action could also enable some countries to increase resources allocated to the social sector.

25. Developing countries, of course, must decide to reduce military expenditure and reorient national budgets to meet social needs. Lastly, he hoped that the World Summit would mark a new stage in international relations based on solidarity and aimed at improving the human condition.

26. Ms. LEEDS (United States of America) said that the World Summit for Social Development offered an opportunity for developed and developing countries to engage in a non-polarized dialogue on improving the lives of people in all countries. The Summit's core issues coincided with many of her country's domestic policy priorities: creating jobs, fighting poverty and integrating all individuals into society. It was a question of empowering all persons, particularly women, so that they might lead healthier and better lives. Steps that encouraged widespread participation by individuals in governance, the economy and society at large promoted social development and should be emphasized in the Summit documents.

27. Much work remains to be done in preparing for the Summit. All participants - delegates and non-governmental organizations alike - should continue working for its success. Her country was fully committed to ensuring equal opportunity for everyone, including people with disabilities and young and elderly people, to participate fully in and contribute to society. The full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and the leadership role of the United Nations therein, the subject of General Assembly resolution 48/95, was directly relevant to preparations for the World Summit. The United States fully supported the implementation of the Standard Rules for Equalization of Opportunities for People with Disabilities and welcomed the appointment of the Special Rapporteur to that end. Creating an environment where people's abilities could be maximized would improve the quality of individual lives and ultimately enrich society.

28. In preparing for the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year in 1995, there was a need to expand opportunities for young people and nurture their aspirations. Guaranteeing equal access to education, regardless of gender, age or background, was a step in that direction. Countries must strive to protect

children and youth from disease, drugs, pollution, discrimination, violence, war and homelessness in order to ensure that they led happy and healthy lives.

29. There was a need to expand opportunities for elderly persons to continue to contribute to society. Discrimination and negative stereotyping based on age must cease. An effort must also be made to build on the inherent strength of the family structure. Initiatives at all levels were needed to enable families to have access to more and better choices, since the family was the basic unit for forming society's values and bringing up young people.

30. Mr. SLABÝ (Czech Republic) said that his country, by signing or acceding to various international agreements, had proved its commitment to full integration into international political and economic structures. At the World Summit for Social Development it intended to share its own experience of development, while learning from other countries. He said that, judging from that experience, the trend for future developments were, politically, towards pluralist democracy, and, economically, towards a free-market economy. Unlike countries where reform had been accompanied by conflict, in his country there had been political and social consensus, which had created a firm basis for economic reform. The indications were that it was also important to have a precisely targeted social policy. His Government had recently implemented measures to protect the groups most vulnerable to economic change and had thus avoided social tension.

31. His delegation considered that the programme of action for discussion at the World Summit for Social Development should be concise, balanced and concrete - action-oriented and people-oriented. Social policy should guarantee women's rights, integrate the disabled and protect vulnerable social groups. It would be important to address education, particularly specialized training. Flourishing independent civic associations such as trade unions and entrepreneurial organizations were a prerequisite to problem-solving by social consensus at the national level. That in turn would influence friendly relations at the international level. Nevertheless, each country must assume responsibility for its own solutions, taking into account its specific conditions. Lastly, his delegation supported the objectives of the International Year of the Family and had welcomed the recent International Conference on Families. It would like to see the family given a central place at the World Summit and at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

32. Mr. TIN (Myanmar) said that cooperatives were a vital component in the economic development of both developing and developed nations. His Government regarded them as a pillar of the economy and an effective means of boosting socio-economic development, and had therefore taken them into account in its new economic strategy. With a view to achieving sustainable economic development, as of 1988 wide-ranging economic reforms had been introduced in Myanmar based on market-oriented policies. Such measures had resulted, inter alia, in the liberalization of trade and an outward-looking exports-promotion policy as well as the enhanced role of cooperatives in the private sector.

33. Four statutes enacted in recent years, including one governing cooperative societies, had facilitated private enterprise and the creation of some 20,000

cooperatives, thereby helping to boost exports. A cooperative industrial fair held in Yangon in 1993 with the aim of generating employment prospects and enhancing markets for domestic industrial goods had also earned substantial revenue. A "cooperative showcase" had been set up at the Ministry of Cooperatives to promote exports. Cooperatives from Myanmar had also made a valuable contribution to the 1993 World Trade Fair held in Taejon, Republic of Korea, and to the 1993 Myanmar Trade Fair.

34. During the current transition towards a market economy, private-sector cooperatives played a crucial role in the socio-economic development of Myanmar. His delegation therefore welcomed the Secretary-General's report on cooperatives (A/49/213). It hoped that the role of cooperatives would be taken up by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council, in the context of sustainable development and international economic cooperation. Since 1995 marked the centenary of the establishment of the International Cooperative Alliance, it was fitting that the General Assembly, in resolution 47/90, had proclaimed the first Saturday of July 1995 to be International Day of Cooperatives. He hoped that it would be observed annually thereafter. With a view to creating greater awareness of the benefits of cooperatives and the aims of the international cooperative movement, that day would be celebrated each year in Myanmar in a fitting manner.

35. Mrs. JUNEJO (Pakistan) said that, despite considerable progress in raising the world's standard of living, much of the world's population still lived in poverty, mainly in Asia and Africa. Any plan for creating a new social order must focus on developing countries' problems. The imbalance between poor and rich countries must be corrected, for social development could not be assured if the majority of the world's population continued to service the wasteful lifestyles of the minority. The eradication of poverty was an international as well as a national responsibility, and a global approach must be adopted, as had already been done in the preservation of peace and security and the promotion of human rights. A delicate balance between market forces and government intervention was needed to stimulate economic growth while ensuring an equitable distribution of wealth.

36. A related aim was to integrate socially vulnerable groups into the mainstream of society. At the forthcoming World Summit for Social Development a new model could emerge, shifting the emphasis from charity and welfare to participation in decision-making.

37. Conflict in many parts of the world had led to social disintegration and massive human suffering. In the interests of social and economic development at the global level, the international community must not forget the victims, once it had addressed the urgent political dimensions of such conflict. Rather, it should ensure that social considerations were an integral part of all programmes for reconciliation and economic recovery. Similarly, the United Nations should play its legitimate role in averting threats to peace and security, in order to accelerate the diversion of resources from defence-oriented security to social security.

38. Her Government had launched a comprehensive social action programme to implement an integrated strategy focusing on education, health, nutrition, welfare and rural water supply and sanitation. It aimed to eradicate poverty, redress gender inequities, develop rural areas and protect the environment. Economic reform in conjunction with privatization had helped in financing social development, and donors at all levels had endorsed and supported the social action programme.

39. The World Summit for Social Development would be an opportunity to reach a consensus on the problems of finance, debt, trade and transfer of technology. Debt relief and cancellation, in particular, could enable developing countries to invest massively in social development programmes and build structures for sustainable development. Her delegation considered that new and additional resources were the most effective tool for breaking the vicious circle of aid, debt and dependency. The concept of "international taxation" deserved serious consideration. Such an independent source of income could provide the United Nations with the means to influence and regulate international economic and social decision-making. She urged the United Nations to end the paralysis brought about by overextended commitments and ever-shrinking resources. There was vast potential in the huge and sprawling machinery of the specialized agencies which could enable the United Nations to take the lead in a new global compact on social development. Such a compact would, however, require resources and commitment from Member States.

40. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) said that social development and economic progress were interdependent. Similarly, social development was relevant to global security. Threats of a social nature such as AIDS and international drug trafficking were no less destabilizing than previous military threats. A coordinated approach was required, and the United Nations had a special role to play.

41. Thailand was deeply committed to the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and had been active both in regional preparatory conferences and in formulating new domestic social policies. The goal of development efforts was humanity itself. Thailand was committed to a "society for all" and placed special importance on protecting and promoting the rights of groups which had been marginalized in the past.

42. His Government placed youth, as humanity's most precious resource, high among its development priorities. His delegation supported the convening of special plenary meetings of the General Assembly and the designation of an international youth day in 1995. He hoped that the draft world programme of action for youth and the youth statement of intent would be adopted.

43. The elderly, as a stabilizing force in society, were highly respected in Thailand. His Government had proclaimed a National Elderly Persons Day and had formulated various long-term projects relating to the equality of life and physical and mental welfare of the ageing, and his delegation thanked the United Nations Population Fund for its assistance in that regard.

44. He said that the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action were valuable ways of raising awareness, and his delegation welcomed the adoption of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. His country had signed a regional proclamation on the participation of people with disabilities and domestically had been improving education and training facilities for the disabled.

45. The strengthening of the family was an indispensable component of social order. A unified family was a prerequisite for the balanced development of society as a whole. Without it, society went into decline. His Government had proclaimed a National Family Day and had begun work on various issues such as the role of fathers as partners in the home, the elimination of domestic violence against women and children, and educational projects. His delegation supported the International Year of the Family, which had led to numerous activities in his country.

46. Mr. KARAMBEZI (Rwanda) said that problems of poverty and social disintegration in his country had been exacerbated by a war lasting nearly four years. The final genocidal acts of that conflict had traumatized Rwandan society and shocked the world. In the name of the victims he thanked the international community for its assistance and sympathy. He counted on continuing solidarity to aid Rwanda in its recovery. As the President of Rwanda had pointed out in his speech to the General Assembly, the Rwandan people would have to rebuild the nation with minimal resources.

47. Thus Rwanda placed its hopes in the World Summit for Social Development. Thousands of lives had been shattered, as had the social infrastructure, and those who had previously been involved with social development had been killed or had fled. International aid - moral, political, technical and economic - was vital. His Government would need the international community's support to put in place the various social programmes which would be necessary if Rwandan society was to learn new values based on respect for human rights, social integration and national development.

48. Mrs. KOVALSKA (Ukraine) said that, in view of the world's growing socio-economic problems, the decision to convene the World Summit for Social Development was important and timely. It was particularly appropriate that the Summit should be held in 1995, the year that marked a half century of United Nations activities. She hoped that the situation of countries undergoing social difficulties due to their transition to a market economy would be taken into account in the final documents of the Summit. Ukraine attached great importance to the regional conferences being held in preparation for the Summit and expected that the recent International Conference on Population and Development as well as the forthcoming World Conference on Women would foster international cooperation in the social area and would help in shaping appropriate social policies at national level.

49. The worsening economic recession and the deterioration in social indicators seen in many countries undergoing economic transition was attributable, inter alia, to inappropriate market policies and errors committed during

privatization as well as to the cost of restructuring industry. Clearly, such trends adversely affected the more vulnerable sections of the population. Moreover, given the shortage of resources available for social development, the considerable costs of disarmament and of the programme to mitigate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, as well as other factors, the existing services in Ukraine were inadequate.

50. The Government was therefore taking steps to set up a new social services system with the view to protecting above all the most underprivileged sections of the population, including those from broken or large families and orphans. Indeed, Ukraine's demographic situation was one of the worst in Europe, with a rapid fall in the birth rate and a rise in the ageing population. Such a trend would have long-term effects on the country's economic development, labour force and social structure.

51. Regrettably, the Government's efforts had brought little improvement in the deteriorating social conditions caused by the drastic reforms. The only way Ukraine could overcome the current crisis was to adopt a new social, economic and political strategy. The President of Ukraine had recently submitted a radical economic-reform programme to the Ukrainian parliament, which had in general supported it. The programme would redress the situation by encouraging workers to increase their output and become more enterprising, increasing labour and service costs payable by high-income earners so as to ease the burden of social costs on the State budget, and fostering greater employee ownership and profit-sharing.

52. The implementation of the programme would be long and complicated, and the Ukraine would draw heavily on the experience gained by other countries in decentralizing their economies, while bearing in mind that there was no standard solution and thus the particular needs of each country must be taken into account. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of joint research projects undertaken by Ukrainian and international experts on matters of priority such as worker-employer relations during reorganization of industry; employment trends, including hidden unemployment; and ascertaining the real causes of falling living standards with the view to shaping an effective social protection policy.

53. Her country greatly appreciated the activities of the United Nations and its agencies and was counting on their collaboration. In that connection, she underlined the usefulness of the international conference held recently in Kiev on labour-market and social-policy reform in Ukraine, organized by ILO and UNDP in cooperation with the United Nations. She stressed that the improvement of the social conditions of the world's population required that assistance from the United Nations and its specialized agencies should be oriented towards more practical goals.

54. Mr. LEPESHKO (Belarus) said that, notwithstanding the efforts made by the United Nations and the international community over the past half century, the world faced social and economic problems on an unprecedented scale. While the situation was undoubtedly the most serious in the developing countries, where more than 1 billion people lived in extreme poverty, other problems such as

ethnic conflicts, drugs, crime and unemployment affected the developed world too. The scarcity of resources for the United Nations social programmes, political instability and environmental degradation thwarted any improvement in the social area, and for precisely those reasons his delegation welcomed the convening of the Summit for Social Development in 1995 and endorsed the core issues to be addressed by it.

55. Moreover, it hoped that the Summit would foster international cooperation on a social policy that would take national interests and needs into account, and looked forward to the establishment of action-oriented plans and appropriate follow-up mechanisms. The Summit should also enhance the political commitment of Governments, shape national policies for social development as well as improve the efficiency of and create awareness about the United Nations social programmes.

56. With regard to employment, it was worthwhile noting the special role of cooperatives, which had great potential for resolving social problems, as borne out by the Secretary-General's report (A/49/213). The cooperative movement had gained momentum in Belarus during the past few decades, and his delegation supported the General Assembly's decision to proclaim an International Day of Cooperatives. The success of the Summit would to a great extent depend on the work of the Preparatory Committee, and he expressed the hope that the spirit of compromise and cooperation demonstrated during the recent inter-sessional consultations would continue to prevail. The final documents of the Summit should set specific and realistic goals aimed at creating the right political and economic conditions for sustained social development, with due regard for the specific needs of countries in different regions, including those with economies in transition.

57. Many members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, such as Belarus, currently undergoing economic transition also had to cope with fundamental social changes, and the most vulnerable groups were hardest hit. Despite depleted energy resources, declining production and scarcity of funds for social infrastructures, the Government of Belarus was endeavouring to resolve social problems by facilitating self-funding by companies and organizations; by providing regular support to one third of the population, chiefly the most vulnerable groups and unskilled workers; and by raising minimum wages and indexing net incomes.

58. A range of social legislation had also been enacted. Programmes for the disabled and the elderly had recently been introduced to mitigate the social, medical and psychological consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the continuing recession. Each year the programme on employment and social protection was revised.

59. Despite the economic hardship resulting from economic reforms, the democratization of State institutions and the tolerance of the population ensured Belarus relative political stability. Belarus relied on the assistance of international organizations such as the United Nations for resolving its

social problems, and therefore attached great importance to United Nations programmes for cooperation with countries undergoing economic transition.

60. Social development in Belarus was gravely hampered by the radioactive fallout from the Chernobyl disaster. The increasing incidence of thyroid diseases among children was a matter of great concern. Although efforts were being made to improve the environment and medical treatment available to the population in contaminated areas, the deteriorating health of children in the country required a huge financial outlay for the establishment of special institutions. Assistance from international organizations, charity funds and other States was therefore vital.

61. In conclusion, he pledged his country's commitment to do its utmost to ensure the success of the World Summit for Social Development, which would give new impetus to economic and social development world wide.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.